

CALIFORNIA

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

FLOOR COVERING INSTALLERS

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INTEREST AREA
REALISTIC



WHAT DOES A FLOOR COVERING INSTALLER DO?

The first floor coverings were probably animal skins used by early hunters and their families to protect against the cold and damp of the ground, as well as provide a soft, cushioned surface. As early as the third century B.C. the Egyptians wove carpets from wool and linen. These techniques slowly spread to form the foundation of the famous Persian and Oriental rug industries. Ceramic tiles have been found in ancient Greek and Roman buildings, and probably date back much earlier. These floor covering materials are still in use today. Linoleum flooring was invented in the mid-1800s, and vinyl flooring became especially popular just after World War II. Today, varieties of resilient floor coverings are installed by FLOOR COVERING INSTALLERS to provide durable floor coverings in homes and businesses.

Floor Covering Installers are skilled workers that lay, replace, or repair carpet, wood flooring, and resilient flooring, such as linoleum, sheet vinyl, and other materials. Installers fit and bond these materials to wood, concrete, metal, and ceramic tile floor materials, and also counter tops and walls, in residential and commercial locations. Most Installers specialize in either carpet or resilient floor coverings, but some install both.

Floor Covering Installers begin a job by inspecting the floor or other surface to ensure it is clean, firm, dry, and as smooth as possible. Floors are swept, holes and cracks filled, and uneven surfaces scraped or sanded. They must then measure the area to be covered and plan the direction and starting place of whichever types of flooring are to be installed.

When carpet is installed wall-to-wall, the Installer fastens a tackless strip to the floor next to the wall. The padded cushion or underlay is then measured, cut, laid, and fastened to the floor. The carpet is rolled out, measured, rough-cut, and then fastened to the strip. The Installer stretches the carpet with the use of a tool called a knee-kicker that fits the carpet evenly and snugly within the room. After a final cut, the Installer uses a power stretcher to stretch the carpet and hook it to the tackless strip to hold it in place. If there are carpet seams, the Installer will join them together by sewing or by use of heat-taped seams. Stair carpeting is usually held in place with staples, and in commercial carpeting glue is usually used to fasten the carpet and padding to the floor.

Floor Covering Installers also apply blocks, strips, or sheets of resilient flooring that absorbs shocks, deadens sounds, and decorates floors, walls, and cabinets. Surface preparation is similar to that used by the carpet Installer. The flooring Installer first measures and cuts the foundation material, such as felt, and cements it to the floor. The Installer then cuts the flooring material, such as linoleum, cork, or rubber, and glues it over the foundation with adhesive cement. Finally, the Installer overlaps adjoining edges of sheet flooring and cuts through

both with a knife to form a tight joint. Blocks of other types of resilient flooring are usually fit snugly together and fastened in place with adhesive cement.

Floor Covering Installers perform the following tasks:

- Stretch carpet to align with walls and ensure a smooth surface, and press carpet in place over tack strips or use staples, tape, tacks or glue to hold carpet in place.
- Install carpet on some floors using adhesive following prescribed method.
- Cut carpet padding to size and install padding, following prescribed method.
- Roll out, measure, mark, and cut carpeting to size with a carpet knife, following floor sketches and allowing extra carpet for final fitting.
- Cut and trim carpet to fit along wall edges, openings, and projections, finishing the edges with a wall trimmer.
- Join edges of carpet and seam edges where necessary, by sewing or by using tape with glue and heated carpet iron.
- Take measurements and study floor sketches to calculate the area to be carpeted and the amount of material needed.
- Nail tack strips around area to be carpeted or use old strips to attach edges of new carpet.
- Fasten metal treads across door openings or where carpet meets flooring to hold carpet in place.
- Sweep, scrape, sand, or chip dirt and irregularities to clean base surfaces, correcting imperfections that may show through the covering.
- Disconnect and remove appliances, light fixtures, and worn floor and wall covering from floors, walls, and cabinets.

The following additional tasks are also performed by the specialty of Floor Layers, Except Carpet, Wood, and Hard Tiles:

- Lay out, position, and apply shock-absorbing, sound-deadening, or decorative coverings to floors, walls, and cabinets, following guidelines to keep courses straight and create designs.

- Roll and press sheet wall and floor covering into cement base to smooth and finish surface, using hand roller.
- Trim excess covering materials, tack edges, and join sections of covering material to form tight joint.
- Form a smooth foundation by stapling plywood or Masonite over the floor or by brushing waterproof compound onto surface and filling cracks with plaster, putty, or grout to seal pores.
- Heat and soften floor covering materials to patch cracks or fit floor coverings around irregular surfaces, using blowtorch.
- Measure and mark guidelines on surfaces or foundations, using chalk lines and dividers.
- Remove excess cement to clean finished surface.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Floor Covering Installers include:

- Installation – Installing equipment, machines, wiring, or programs to meet specifications.
- Equipment Selection – Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- Monitoring – Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- Reading Comprehension – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- Building and Construction – Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- Static Strength – The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
- Mathematics – Using mathematics to solve problems.
- Manual Dexterity – The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.

- Visualization – The ability to imagine how something will look after it is moved around or when its parts are moved or rearranged.
- Information Ordering – The ability to arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
- Trunk Strength – The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without ‘giving out’ or fatiguing.
- Stamina – The ability to exert yourself physically over long periods of time without getting winded or out of breath.
- Gross Body Coordination – The ability to coordinate the movement of your arms, legs, and torso together when the whole body is in motion.
- Near Vision – The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Floor Covering Installers work indoors at work sites that include homes, apartments, and commercial buildings. Work sites that are being remodeled are more likely to be heated or air-conditioned than are new work site locations. Installers may work alone or with a helper, or apprentice in small residential jobs, but on large commercial jobs they usually work in teams.

The work is physically demanding and must be done quickly to stay within the cost estimates for the job. Installers must lift not only the floor covering but must also often move furniture, both of which can weigh well over one hundred pounds. This can cause back problems for Installers. Using the knee kicker can cause knee problems, as can the prolonged time they spend on cold and hard floors. They must also be aware of the potential chemical hazards of the various adhesives and sealants they use.

Installers use a variety of tools which can cost them as much as \$1,000. These include hammers, knives, staple guns, knee kickers, hand and power stretchers, trowels, various sewing tools, rollers, and sanding machines. Employers will normally supply the more costly equipment.

Prior to 1980, asbestos was commonly used in vinyl flooring. Most of the time, new flooring can be laid directly over the old flooring. This prevents the asbestos from being a problem. In some cases, however, the asbestos flooring must be removed to repair structural damage. Strict safety rules must be followed when removing asbestos flooring to protect the safety of the Installer.

Union Membership

Floor Covering Installers can become members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

Carpet Installers

Estimated number of workers in 2002:	9,400
Estimated number of workers in 2012:	13,200
Projected Growth 2002-2012:	40.4%
Est. openings due to separations by 2012:	1,500

These figures do not include self-employment.

This occupation will grow much faster than average compared with all occupations in California. There will be a total of 5,300 job opportunities in this occupation from 2002 through 2012.

Floor Layers, Except Carpet, Wood, and Hard Tiles

Estimated number of workers in 2002:	2,900
Estimated number of workers in 2012:	4,100
Projected Growth 2002-2012:	41.4%
Est. openings due to separations by 2012:	500

These figures do not include self-employment.

This occupation will grow much faster than average compared with all occupations in California. There will be a total of 1,700 job opportunities in this occupation from 2002 through 2012.

Trends

The demand for Floor Covering Installers is not as affected by fluctuations in the economy as other construction trades since commercial and residential floor coverings need replacement due to wear or fashion.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

The following information is from the Occupational Employment Statistics Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID:

Carpet Installers 2005 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$13.12	to	\$23.79
Average hourly wage	\$19.19		
Average annual wage	\$39,911		

These figures do not include self-employment.

Floor Layers, Except Carpet, Wood, and Hard Tiles 2005 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$13.24	to	\$23.25
Average hourly wage	\$19.29		
Average annual wage	\$40,124		

These figures do not include self-employment.

Hours

Floor Covering Installers usually work 40 hours a week during the day, but may work evenings and weekends on occasion. Because they usually work indoors, employment is not as seasonal as many other construction jobs.

Benefits

Benefits for union workers are medical (including chiropractic), vision, dental, life insurance, and pensions.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

The majority of Floor Covering Installers learn their trade on the job as helpers to experienced workers. Informal training by individual employers normally takes the workers about 18

months to two years to gain proficiency in the trade. Others learn the job through formal union apprenticeship programs.

Union members spend four years in an apprenticeship program before reaching journey level. To become an apprentice an individual must be 18 years old, have a high school diploma or pass the GED, possess a valid driver's license, and pass a math skills test. Beginning apprentices are paid 45 percent of the journey-level wage and are required to take one week of classroom education every three months. As they make satisfactory progress they receive incremental pay increases every six months. The union works with the Job Corps Program to help applicants gain their high school diploma or equivalent, driver's license, and math and other necessary skills.

High school courses helpful to job applicants are mathematics, wood and metal shop, and mechanical drawing. Good physical condition, manual dexterity, and a good sense of color visualization are helpful traits.

Licensing and Certification

There are no licensing or certification requirements.

Continuing Education

There are no continuing education requirements but journey-level upgrading education is available to union members.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Union members can sign up on the out-of-work list with their union local. In-person contact remains one of the most effective job search methods. Most Floor Covering Installers are employed in the construction industries.

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- Building, General Contractors
- Carpets and Rugs
- Floor Laying, Refinishing, and Resurfacing
- Floor Materials

- Flooring and Floor Covering Contractors
- Internet Guide blue pages
- Linoleum Layers

The following Internet resources can be helpful to the job search process:

America's Career InfoNet
www.acinet.org

America's Job Bank
www.ajb.dni.us

CalJOBSSM
www.caljobs.ca.gov

Job Search and Resume Writing
www.worksmart.ca.gov/success_tips_menu.html

Local Job Service Offices
www.edd.ca.gov/jsrep/jsloc.htm

Occupational Information Network (O*NET) Online
<http://online.onetcenter.org>

One-Stop Career Centers List
www.edd.ca.gov/ONE-STOP/pic.htm

For statewide and local projections, wages, employers by county, and other occupational information go to labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov and select *Find an Occupation Profile*.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

Many Installers work for a Floor Covering Installer business to learn the trade, and then become self-employed. Nationwide about one-half of all Installers are self-employed. Some Installers go on to become a crew leader, a supervisor, or an estimator in large firms.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
Northern California District Council 16
2705 Constitution Drive
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 245-1080

International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
Southern California District Council 36
297 North Marengo Avenue, Suite 120
Pasadena, CA 91101
(626) 584-9925

Floor Covering Installation Contractors Association
7439 Millwood Drive
West Bloomfield, MI 48322-1234
(248) 661-5015
www.fcica.com

CA Division of Apprenticeship Standards
For the closest district office, visit
www.dir.ca.gov/DAS/das.html

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Tile Setters	No. 103
Carpenters	No. 169

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)

Carpet Installers	47-2041
Floor Layers, Except Carpet, Wood, and Hard Tiles	47-2042

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)

Carpet Installers	47-2041.00
Floor Layers, Except Carpet, Wood, and Hard Tiles	47-2042.00
Tile and Marble Setters	47-2044.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)

Carpet Installers	87602
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